DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 404 401 UD 031 508

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TITLE Resilience and Motivation in Two Ethnic Minority Populations.
PUB DATE [96]
NOTE 12p.
PUB TYPE Information Analyses (070) -- Reports - Evaluative/Feasibility (142)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Adolescents; *Black Students; Cognitive Ability; *Ethnic Groups; Extracurricular Activities; *Hispanic Americans; *Minority Groups; Personality Traits; Secondary Education; Self Concept; *Student Motivation
IDENTIFIERS African Americans; Hispanic American Students; *Resilience (Personality)

ABSTRACT

Two studies are reviewed that have uncovered how the motivational patterns of resilient African American and Hispanic adolescents differ from their nonresilient counterparts. The first study found that resilient African American adolescents differed from their nonresilient counterparts in having a stronger cognitive motivational pattern of the four motivational dimensions of ability, environmental support, control, and importance and emphasis. The resilient African American students also placed more emphasis on extracurricular activities and on material gain. Resilient Hispanic adolescents also had motivational patterns that differed from their counterparts. Resilient Hispanic students believed more in their cognitive abilities than the nonresilient adolescents and they placed less of an emphasis on belongingness than their nonresilient counterparts. Resilient African American students had a more robust cognitive motivational pattern, being firmer in purpose and outlook, than the resilient Hispanic adolescents, whose motivational pattern could still be described as tenacious. In both ethnic groups, resilient students believed in the importance of material gain. These studies represent an initial exploration into the motivational patterns of resilience among ethnic groups. (Contains 2 figures and 13 references.) (SLD)

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RESILIENCE AND MOTIVATION IN TWO ETHNIC MINORITY POPULATIONS

Resilience is a multifaceted phenomenon that encompasses environmental and personal factors. Comprehensively, resilience is the ability to thrive, mature, and increase competence in the face of adverse circumstances or obstacles. The obstacles may be severe and infrequent or chronic and consistent. Examples of a severe and infrequent circumstance include an earth quake or a divorce. Examples of a chronic and consistent obstacle include cancer, poverty, and low social status. For a person to thrive, mature, and increase competence in the face of obstacles he or she must draw on all of his or her resources, both environmental and personal. One environmental factor that assists in resilience is knowledgeable and skilled others interacting with the individual. Some personal factors that contribute to resilience are self-concept and intelligence. Some of the factors associated with resilience are similar across ethnic groups (Gordon, 1994).

The fact that resilience encompasses environmental and personal factors alludes to its multifaceted nature (Rutter, 1985). However, the state of being resilient or competent changes over time and through development as the tasks that one needs to complete become more and more complex. As a person develops and the definition of competence changes, a person may need to rely on different factors to obtain a state of resilience. This also contributes to the multifaceted nature of the phenomenon.

Previous research has uncovered some of the personal and environmental characteristics that contribute to resilience. Some of the personal factors which contribute to resilience are sensitivity, sociability, inner control, cooperativeness, and cognitive superiority (Garmezy & Rutter, 1983; Murphy & Moriarty, 1976; Werner & Smith, 1982, 1992). Other contemporary studies (Luthar, 1991) confirmed the personal characteristics of internal locus of control and social skills, but found intelligence to detract from resilience.

The environmental factors can be categorized into two groups: educational or school environment and the familial environment. As for the school, it is important for the school to have high academic standards (Luthar & Zigler, 1991) and to be generally supportive of the students and their families (Garmezy & Rutter, 1983 and Luthar & Zigler, 1991). It is also helpful for schools to provide accomplishments and success at meaningful tasks in order to enhance self-concept (Garmezy & Rutter, 1983).

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The familial environment contributes to the resilience phenomenon as well. Structure, limits, patterns, rituals, and traditions also seem to be important throughout childhood for fostering resilience (Werner & Smith, 1992). Faith and spirituality are important as well (Murphy & Moriarty, 1976 and Werner & Smith, 1992). It also helps if parents are involved in their children's schooling (Connell, Spencer, and Aber, 1994).

My research adds to prior research in two distinct ways. First, my research looks at motivation, a relatively neglected variable in resilience research. Second, my research examines the motivational patterns of resilient adolescents in two ethnic minority populations, African Americans and Hispanics. Let us begin by examining the conceptual framework.

Motivation

Motivation in my research is defined by motivational systems theory (Ford, 1992). According to this theory motivation is the patterning of goals, emotions, and self-concept. The specific motivational equation is goals x emotions x self-concept. Self-concept is beliefs about abilities and beliefs about environmental support. These two beliefs create the motivational pattern. Ten such motivational patterns exist (See figures 1 and 2) (Ford, 1992, Gordon, 1995). An example motivational pattern is tenacious. People with this pattern believe strongly in their abilities, but believe that the environment is tenuous or neutral. The other aspects of motivation are beliefs about goal importance and emotions. Beliefs about goal importance affect the strength of the motivational pattern and emotions play two roles. Emotions evaluate the possibility of goal attainment and energize the motivational pattern. The four motivational dimensions used in this study are beliefs about ability, beliefs about environmental support, beliefs about control, and beliefs about importance/emphasis. Although, beliefs about control are not in motivational systems theory, I include it in my framework. Locus of control, control, is a traditional aspect of self-concept that has been shown to be a part of motivation (Bandura, 1977) and an important factor in resilience (Luthar, 1991).

Research Findings

My two studies have uncovered how the motivational patterns of resilient

African American and Hispanic adolescents differ from their non-resilient counterparts. In the first study (Gordon, 1995), I discovered that resilient African American adolescents differed from their non-resilient counterparts in three motivational areas. They had a stronger cognitive motivational pattern on all four motivational dimensions (ability, environmental support, control, and importance/emphasis). Their cognitive motivational pattern was robust.

The resilient African-American students also placed more emphasis on extra-curricular activities. Their motivational pattern was vulnerable, as was the pattern of the non-resilient students. However, they placed more emphasis here. The resilient students also placed more emphasis on material gain. Again, their motivational pattern didn't differ from the non-resilient students, but they placed more emphasis on material gain.

Resilient Hispanic adolescents had motivational patterns which differed from their counterparts as well (Gordon, 1996). The resilient Hispanic adolescents believed more in their cognitive abilities than the non-resilient adolescents. Their motivational pattern was tenacious. They also placed less of an emphasis on belongingness than their non-resilient counterparts, even though their motivational pattern was tenacious. These are the only two motivational areas where the Hispanic adolescents differed.

Discussion

Motivation is definitely an area where resilient and non-resilient students differ. This difference, it seems, varies by ethnic groups. Resilient African-American adolescents differ from their counterparts and resilient Hispanic adolescents differ from their counterparts. However, the differences vary across ethnic groups as well.

The difference in cognitive motivation is not surprising for either the African American or Hispanic ethnic group. What is surprising, is that the resilient African American adolescents were superior on all four motivational dimensions (ability, environmental support, control, and importance/emphasis). This means that their cognitive motivational pattern was a lot stronger.

The African-American adolescents had a robust cognitive motivational pattern. This means that they were firm in purpose and outlook. This motivational pattern was associated with their resilience status and their academic achievement. This made their motivational pattern stronger than the non-resilient African American adolescents

and the resilient Hispanic adolescents. They key element here is that the resilient African American youth believed that their environment supported their cognitive ability.

The resilient Hispanic adolescents had a tenacious motivational pattern in the cognitive sphere. Although this was not as strong as the resilient African American adolescents, it was stronger than the non-resilient Hispanic adolescents who had a vulnerable motivational pattern. The non-resilient Hispanic adolescents' motivational pattern made them vulnerable in times of stress. The resilient Hispanic adolescents' motivational pattern was enough to differentiate them from the non-resilient students. It was also enough to keep them resilient and help them to achieve academically.

Differences existed in material gain for resilient and non-resilient African American adolescents. Both groups of adolescents had a vulnerable motivational pattern, but the resilient students placed more emphasis here. This suggests that for the resilient students, their lack of ability and the neutrality of environmental support in the area of material gain bothered their self-concept more. It also suggests that they believed this to be an important area even though, they didn't believe in their own ability or their environmental support. The resilient students truly believed in the importance of material gain. It could be that they are preparing themselves for college by saving money. It could mean that they are contributing to their family's financial situation. It could also mean that they have bought into the idea of American capitalism. More qualitative research is needed to know for sure.

Differences also existed in extra-curricular activities for the resilient and non-resilient African American adolescents. Both the resilient and non-resilient African American adolescents had a vulnerable motivational pattern in the extra-curricular activity area. However, the resilient adolescents placed more emphasis and importance here. This means that their self-concept was more impacted by their beliefs than their non-resilient counterparts. This could mean that they realize how important these activities are for the development of skills. It could also mean that they realize that participation in these activities might aid them in the college admissions process.

The resilient Hispanic adolescents place less of an emphasis on belongingness than their non-resilient counterparts. Both groups of students have a tenacious cognitive pattern; the difference lies in the amount of emphasis. They both believe they have the ability to make close ties, but that their environment does not support

them making close ties. Less of an emphasis on belongingness for resilient Hispanic adolescents has a variety of possible meanings. It seems that the resilient students may be rejecting what is a traditional Hispanic value for more mainstream American beliefs (Gordon, 1996). It could also mean that the resilient students are adapting to a less responsive environment. However, more qualitative research is needed to know for sure.

Conclusion

Although these two studies represent an initial exploratory step, it is still important to take note of their findings. It seems that motivational patterns of resilient adolescents differ from non-resilient adolescents and that these differences vary across ethnic groups. More research is definitely needed with other ethnic groups. It also seems that qualitative research could be beneficial as it could reveal how and why the motivational patterns differ. For example, we could find out why resilient African American adolescents emphasize material gain and why resilient Hispanic adolescents deemphasize belongingness. I am currently writing grants with the hopes of accomplishing those objectives. More research is also needed with different age groups. I am currently involved in a study which represents the first step in accomplishing that aim.

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Definitions (adapted from Webster's Seventh New Collegiate Dictionary):

R Pattern	Robust	-- "strong and firm in purpose or outlook"
M Pattern	Modest	-- "placing a moderate estimate on one's abilities"
F Pattern	Fragile	-- "intact but easily broken or damaged"
T Pattern	Tenacious	-- "suggests strength in dealing with challenges and obstacles"
V Pattern	Vulnerable	-- "functioning adequately but may be at risk under conditions of stress"
S Pattern	Self-doubting	-- "having a lack of faith in one's chances for success"
A1 Pattern	Accepting	-- "to endure difficulties quietly and with courage"
A2 Pattern	Antagonistic	-- "tending toward actively expressed annoyance or hostility"
D Pattern	Discouraged	-- "being deprived of but potentially maintaining some confidence or hope"
H Pattern	Hopeless	-- "having no expectation of success"

Figure 2

CONTEXT BELIEFS	CAPABILITY BELIEFS: Strong	Moderate or Variable	Weak
Positive	R Robust Pattern	M Modest Pattern	F Fragile Pattern
Neutral or Variable	T Tenacious Pattern	V Vulnerable Pattern	S Self-Doubting Pattern
Negative	A1 or A2 Accepting or Antagonistic Pattern	D Discouraged Pattern	H Hopeless Pattern

Figure 1